

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING NEEDS

A combination of three approaches has been used to assess and identify park and recreation needs:

1. Standard-based
2. Demand-based
3. Resource-based

Standard-Based Criteria for Parkland

Houston is significantly short of parkland based on traditional standards and in comparison with most other major Texas cities. The old rule-of-thumb used to estimate the amount of parkland needed has been 10 acres per 1,000 population plus at least an equal amount of acreage in parkways, large parks, forests and the like, either within or adjacent to the city. For many years, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) further refined this rule-of-thumb into the following standards.

TRADITIONAL NRPA STANDARDS	
Park Type	Recommended Acres per 1000 Population
Neighborhood	1.25 to 2.5
Community & Linear	5 to 8
Regional, Metro	15 to 20
Total	21.25 to 30.5

The NRPA standards are echoed by the Urban Land Institute, which recommends 25.5 acres of parkland per thousand residents.

While the NRPA no longer espouses “one-size fits all” national standards as explained below, it is still noteworthy to compare Houston’s current parkland acreage with the “old” national standards. As shown below, total park acreage within Houston, inclusive of Harris and Fort Bend County parks and private/semi-public lands, is just over 35,000 acres.

EXISTING HOUSTON PARKLAND					
Park Type	Acres provided by City	Acres provided by Counties	Private/Semi-public park acreages	Total	Acres per 1000 Pop.
Neighborhood	773	46	350	1,169	0.6
Community	2,046	103	627	2,776	1.5
Regional, Metro & Special Use	17,718	13,256	81	31,055	16.6
Total	20,537	13,405	1,058	35,000	18.7

The traditional NRPA standard of 21.25 acres per 1000 population would suggest that Houston have at least 39,749 acres of parkland based on a total estimated population in 1997 or 1,870,533. The resulting deficit between what Houston should have (39,749 acres) and what it does have (35,000 acres) is 4,749 acres. While this figure provides an

initial barometric-type reading, it should not be used as the principal determinate of Houston's parkland needs. Instead it justifies the need for further investigation as discussed herein.

Currently, the City's park system provides about 11 acres per thousand persons based on the current population. Inclusion of private and semi-public parkland improves the ratio just slightly to 11.5. If Harris County and Fort Bend County parkland is also included, the ratio improves to 18.7, but the Counties' largest parks also serve tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of persons residing outside the City's corporate limit. Comparative ratios for each geographic sector of Houston are provided below.

EXISTING PARK ACRES PER 1000 RESIDENTS BY SECTOR						
Sector	City Acres	County Acres	Semi-Public Acres	Total Acres	Population	Ratio
Central	3595	278	73	3946	408,430	9.66
Southeast	1250	446	156	1852	269,275	6.88
Southwest	1795	233	250	2278	430,667	5.29
West	10,783	12,100	164	23,047	347,252	66.37
Northwest	461	0	40	501	221,124	2.27
Northeast	1934	38	0	1972	116,703	16.90
Far Northeast	719	310	375	1404	77,082	18.2
Total	20,537	13,405	1058	35,000	1,870,533	18.7

Listed below is data for Texas' other major cities in comparison to Houston.

PARK SYSTEM ACREAGES OF OTHER TEXAS CITIES			
City	Population	Park Acres	Acres/1000
Austin	523,352	14,583	27.9
Dallas	1,006,877	21,642	21.5
Fort Worth	490,200	9,813	20.0
Houston	1,870,533	20,537	11.0
San Antonio	1,068,600	6,809	6.4

Sources: Fort Worth Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan (1998)
San Antonio Parks and Recreation System Plan (1998)

While comparisons to traditional standards and other cities are informative, they should not be used as the sole criteria to assess Houston's park needs. Several factors must be kept in mind including:

- Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) manages many miles of major drainageways and attendant floodways that might otherwise be included in the City's linear park acreage. With approximately 113 miles of bayou within the City limit at

an average width of 250 feet, this acreage would total more than 3,400 and substantially cut the NRPA calculated deficit.

- Houston is somewhat unique in the extent of existing private park and recreation facilities as indicated above and identified in the inventory analysis. This is particularly true in major master planned communities such as Clear Lake and Kingwood.
- Not all cities measure parkland the same way. Dallas, for example, includes the surface area of several large lakes in their parkland inventory while Houston does not. Lake Houston is an important regional recreation facility totaling 12,236 acres, but it is not counted as parkland.

As noted earlier, the NRPA has recently moved away from one-size-fits-all acreage standards because of variable local conditions and the desire to better quantify local needs. The new method employs market assessment procedures that are expressed as the Level of Service (LOS). These emerging standards require detailed field analysis and observation of actual daily park and facility use to determine more precisely a community's park and recreation needs. For a city the size of Houston, the task would be daunting. Substantial personnel resources would be required in order to conduct the appropriate level of detailed observation and study at each of the City's 300+ parks. Neither Austin, Fort Worth, nor San Antonio used this methodology in completing their park master plans; all of which were completed and/or adopted in 1998. Nonetheless, LOS standards can provide a more accurate assessment of the need for an individual facility. The City should undertake periodic field studies at selected parks to develop a database for future updates of this master plan. Complete information on LOS is described in the NRPA's 1996 edition of *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*.

Acquisition of additional parkland should address existing gaps in service pursuant to the park classification system and a standard service area specified for each park type. Service areas are, of course, strongly influenced by: 1) physical constraints, (man-made and natural) such as freeways, major thoroughfares, railroads, bayous and other drainageways, traffic access patterns, and land availability, and 2) the presence and distribution of County, semi-public and private park and recreation facilities.

The absence of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan (i.e. zoning) for Houston presents an additional challenge. Without an enforceable land use plan, it is more difficult to pinpoint future park sites in mostly undeveloped areas, especially those away from current directions of major development. However, large undeveloped areas within the City limit are relatively few. Most new development growth is occurring within the City's five mile extra-territorial jurisdiction; inside the City limit there has been substantial in-fill development and redevelopment. Existing neighborhoods, especially those without enforceable deed restrictions are subject to shifts in land use, and density, but these changes are sometimes difficult to predict. The use of standard-based criteria for land acquisition must, accordingly, be flexible and responsive.

Standard Based Criteria for Park and Recreation Facilities

Nationally recognized quantitative standards for individual recreational facilities are well established. Listed below are those set forth in 1990 by the NRPA and the Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan (TORP). Also included for comparative purposes are regional standards for the Dallas-Fort Worth area followed by averages of the three groups of standards. Each ratio recommends the number of residents to be served per a single facility type.

RECREATION FACILITY STANDARDS				
Facility	1990 NRPA	1990 TORP	Dallas-Fort Worth Region	Average
Competition Softball/Baseball	1:30,000	1:8,500	1:19,600	1:19,367
Competition Soccer Fields	1:10,000	1:13,200	1:7,100	1:10,100
Tennis Courts	1:2,000	1:2,600	1:4,800	1:3,133
Playgrounds	N/A	1:2,200	1:4,400	1:3,300
Community Centers	1:25,000	N/A	1:35,300	1:30,150
Swimming Pools	1:20,000	1:20,400	1:33,200	1:24,533
Golf Courses (18 hole)	1:50,000	1:109,000	1:102,700	1:87,233

The following table provides data on Houston's existing supply of City and private/semi-public recreational facilities along with the resulting population-based ratios using again the 1997 estimate of 1,870,533.

EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND RATIOS					
Facility	City		Private/ Semi-Public		Total
	Quantity	Ratio		Total	Ratio
Competition Softball/Baseball	164	1:11,406	N/A	N/A	1:11,406
Competition Soccer Fields	70	1:26,722	N/A	N/A	1:26,722
Tennis Courts	218	1:8,580	165	383	1:4,884
Playgrounds	253	1:7,393	83	336	1:5,567
Community Centers	55	1:34,010	3	58	1:32,251
Swimming Pools	44	1:42,512	94	138	1:13,555
Golf Courses (18 hole)	7	1:267,219	15	22	1:85,024

Recreational facility standards established for Houston should reflect NRPA and TORP guidelines, the Parks to Standard Program, local conditions and public input. In selected areas, county and private facilities will exert a strong influence. Based on these considerations, the Master Plan recommends the following standards:

Competition Softball/Baseball	1:20,000
Competition Soccer Fields	1:10,000
Tennis Courts	1: 5,000
Playgrounds	1: 4,000
Community Centers	1:30,000
Swimming Pools	1:25,000
Golf Courses	1:90,000

The table below compares the average standards, the recommended standards for Houston, and the existing supply ratios as listed above.

Facility	Average Standard	Houston Standard	Existing Supply Ratio
Competition Softball/Baseball	1:19,367	1:20,000	1:11,406
Competition Soccer Fields	1:10,100	1:10,000	1:26,722
Tennis Courts	1:3,133	1: 5,000	1:4,884
Playgrounds	1:3,300	1: 4,000	1:5,567
Community Centers	1:30,150	1:30,000	1:32,251
Swimming Pools	1:24,533	1:25,000	1:13,555
Golf Courses (18 hole)	1:87,233	1:90,000	1:85,024

According to the table, the City appears to have an ample supply of softball/baseball fields, swimming pools and golf courses. Also, most of the private and semi-public sports complexes are comprised of softball/baseball fields. The most severe shortage is the number of soccer fields as further discussed below. While it would appear that tennis courts and playgrounds are also in short supply, the total number of courts indicated above excludes private, for-profit tennis centers and all school facilities. The playground total excludes elementary schools, including the 119 sites developed as school parks under the SPARK program. Including the SPARK sites alone improves the ratio to 1:4,111.

Based on the Houston standard for soccer, the City needs at least 2 times the current number of fields. The following table provides a more detailed needs assessment across the various geographic sectors of the City. The Central Sector, generally defined as inside the Loop, has been further divided into four quadrants.

CURRENT SOCCER FIELD NEEDS				
Sector	Existing Fields	Current Population	Ratio	New Fields Needed Now
Central-northeast	2	52,638	1:26,319	3
Central-southeast	14	137,451	1: 9,818	0
Central-southwest	1	120,918	1:120,918	11
Central-northwest	8	97,423	1:12,178	2
	25	408,430	1:16,337	16
Southeast	16	269,275	1:16,830	11
Southwest	22	430,667	1:19,576	21
West	9	347,252	1:38,584	25
Northwest	9	221,124	1:24,569	13
Northeast	8	116,703	1:14,588	4
Far Northeast	0	77,082	0	8
	89	1,870,533	1:21,017	98

A total of 98 additional soccer fields are needed now just to keep up with the current population. However, Houston's population is projected to grow from 1,870,533 to approximately 1,955,000 by the year 2010, an increase of 124,467. Maintaining the ratio of 1 field per 10,000 residents will require 12 more fields over that same time period. The table below projects total soccer field needs by sector through 2010 based on current growth patterns.

TOTAL SOCCER FIELD NEEDS				
Sector	Existing Fields	New Fields Needed Now	More Fields Needed by 2010	Total
Central – northeast	2	3	0	5
Central – southeast	14	0	1	15
Central – southwest	1	11	1	13
Central – northwest	8	2	1	11
	25	16	3	44
Southeast	16	11	2	29
Southwest	22	21	3	46
West	9	25	2	36
Northwest	9	13	1	23
Northeast	8	4	0	12
Far Northeast	0	8	1	9
	89	98	12	199

The urgent needs for additional fields in portions of southwest Houston is already being addressed through several private sector initiatives discussed in more detail on page 6.33. With regard to far northeast Houston, the Kingwood community is served by several sports field complexes owned and maintained by the Kingwood Services Association.

In response to the readily apparent need for more soccer fields, the Parks and Recreation Department has completed a more detailed investigation resulting in a separate report entitled *Soccer Fields Master Plan*. The report reviews all city and non-city soccer sites within the corporate limit, as well as current user groups including City youth soccer leagues, private youth and adult soccer clubs, and adult soccer leagues with permitted fields. Additional park sites intended for soccer use as identified in the report have been incorporated into the land acquisition needs discussed in this section.

Demand-Based Criteria for Parkland

The public opinion survey conducted as part of the master plan development process indicated a strong desire by Houston residents to acquire more parkland in areas that are currently poorly served. As shown in the public opinion survey results provided in Appendix D, it was one of the top five priorities.

Houston's demand for additional parkland prior to initiation of this master plan is also well documented. In 1983, the Green Ribbon Committee, a citizen's group appointed by local, state and federal authorities, concluded in part that the supply of parkland must be substantially increased. They recommended aggressive acquisition of parkland in growth areas with obvious needs. Over the next ten years, 45 new parks were added totaling about 12,700 acres. Despite the dramatic increase, former Mayor Lanier's Transition Committee on Parks reported in 1992 that the City's developed and maintained park acreage should be doubled. The Transition Committee Report also noted that the distribution of parks and park facilities envisioned by the Green Ribbon Committee has not been achieved, resulting in areas of our city without adequate parks and recreational facilities.

In 1994, a community-wide visioning process was initiated to bring people together to share information and to develop a consensus on the issues, goals, and opportunities that will shape Houston's future. Entitled *Imagine Houston*, the process involved thousands of Houstonians who contributed countless hours. The final report of *Imagine Houston*, completed in 1997, included the following action items:

1. Acquire more land for all types of parks (man-made, developed, and natural), especially more metro (200 or more acres) and regional parks (50-200 acres).
2. Provide incentives for developers to give additional land for greenspace use.
3. Designate open spaces restricted to passive recreation within City and County parks to provide more natural areas for nature watching, walking and greenspace.
4. Support and assist neighborhoods who want to acquire land for parks (to be owned by the neighborhood associations).

The demand for open space within the central city, especially for areas experiencing redevelopment at increased densities has been strongly expressed. Homeowner and civic groups, including the Neartown Association, have spoken out on the issue in public meetings and other forums regarding proposed revisions to the City's development ordinance. The City Council approved plan for the Midtown Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) includes the improvement and acquisition of public parks, improvements, open space corridors along streets, and the conversion of unnecessary streets to pedestrian open space pathways. Similar provisions could be incorporated into other T.I.R.Z. plans.

Other neighborhood groups have also expressed parkland needs as part of ongoing community improvement efforts coordinated by the Neighborhood Services Division of

the Planning and Development Department. Specific areas noted by City staff include Fondren Southwest, Gulfton, Hiram Clarke area (Townwood Park), Stella Link, Acres Homes, and the Glen Lee subdivision near Intercontinental Airport.

Demand Based Criteria for Park and Recreation Facilities

The public opinion survey conducted as part of the master plan development process revealed the top ten city-wide park and recreational facility needs to be as follows:

1. Bicycle, jogging and exercise trails
2. Security lighting
3. Nature areas
4. Community centers
5. Playgrounds
6. Tree plantings
7. Covered picnic pavilions
8. Open play areas
9. Swimming pools
10. Soccer fields

Several mathematical demand-based methods are available to calculate facility quantities. As mentioned earlier, one is the Level of Service (LOS) Standard set forth by the NRPA. A second method is the Outdoor Recreation Capacity Analysis developed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department as part of the 1990 Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan (TORP).

The TORP method employs a series of calculations to determine the number of facilities needed per activity to meet anticipated future demand. The calculations require multiple sets of assumptions and projections integrated with data about existing facility availability, usage, and capacity. Despite all the “number crunching”, the analysis does not consider the geographic distribution within a given area.

Neither method described above has been applied to Houston for several reasons:

1. The City’s immense size and diversity
2. The amount of data needed
3. The extent of data currently available.

While a mathematical basis is not necessarily needed to calculate future demand for facilities such as picnic tables, it would be helpful in determining more precisely the number of athletic fields required. Implementation of a computerized information management system is recommended in order to quantify and track the supply and demand for athletic fields by sport and by season. With this system in place, current and future needs for field sports and diamond sports can be better projected both numerically and geographically.

The demand for certain types of facilities on a park-by-park basis is well defined through the Parks to Standard Program and community meetings associated with each project. Also, an important conduit of information and assistance are the Park Advisory Councils (PAC's). PAC's are park-based advisory groups composed of local citizens representing a wide range of their community that includes churches, schools, government, business, civic organizations, youth, adult and senior groups, media, law-enforcement and service agencies. PAC's have been formed to act as a voice for community based programming to effectively address the needs and objectives of each park community. They help identify community resources for programs and activities, coordinate fundraisers, conduct cleanups, and plan and cosponsor special community events. There are currently 55 Park Advisory Councils located throughout the City. Most meet monthly on a regular basis.

Changes in demand for certain activities have become apparent while inventorying existing park and recreational facilities. Golf courses have increased and more non-city courses are proposed; meanwhile, the demand for tennis appears to be diminishing and a surprising number of courts at private neighborhood parks have been neglected, dismantled, or in a few cases completely removed. The demand for walking trails is readily apparent and has been verified by City staff. The need for additional soccer fields is also readily evident at certain parks including Burnet Bayland and Townwood. Obviously, certain recreational pursuits increase and decrease in popularity over time. A good way to monitor recreational trends is by tracking sales in sporting goods stores.

Resource-Based Criteria for Natural Resources

A major goal of a park planning document should be to identify significant natural resources and seek their inclusion in the park system. Bayous, of course, are Houston's defining natural resource. Early plans for Houston called for a system of parkways along the bayous. This system has only been partially realized. The idea remains popular today. As discussed in the *Imagine Houston* report, bayous should be "*..restored and protected to provide environmental and economic benefits such as: natural and wildlife habitat; water supply; recreation and transportation; stormwater drainage; and scenic beauty*". Many Houstonians, either individually or through organizations such as the Bayou Preservation Association and the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, have undertaken serious efforts to increase public awareness and find opportunities to protect and enhance the City's prime natural assets.

Although significant portions of Houston's bayous are already designated as linear parks either by the City or Harris County, many other areas have yet to be included. Fortunately, most are publicly owned in fee or controlled by easements by Harris County and maintained by the County's Flood Control District. Given the importance of this natural resource, a major objective of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan should be to enhance and enlarge the linear park system along major bayous in cooperation with the County and in coordination with other applicable planning efforts including:

- Recommendations of the Buffalo Bayou Task Force (1986)
- Buffalo Bayou East Sector Redevelopment Plan (1992)
- Comprehensive Bikeway Plan (1993)
- City of Houston Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan (updated annually)
- Watershed Management Plans (prepared by flood control agencies)

Natural resource opportunities also include the San Jacinto River and Caney Creek, upstream from Lake Houston. Attendant floodplains contain extensive wildlife habitats. The opportunity exists to create a wonderful system of soft-surface trails along Caney Creek linking the State park with the Kingwood area.

Resource Based Criteria for Historical Resources

Historic preservation has drawn increased attention in recent years. One example is the current restoration of Allen's Landing. With increased public awareness, additional historic sites and structures will likely be brought into the public domain for perpetual maintenance. (Historic preservation in Texas requires public sector persistence and private sector cooperation.) While this Master Plan does not identify specific historical resource-based sites or structures, pressure for the inclusion of some of these assets in the park system should be expected and accommodated.

CATEGORIES OF NEEDS

Outlined below are Houston's park system needs reflective of the standard-based, demand-based, and resource-based criteria used to assess needs.

- Land Acquisitions
 - New Park Sites, by Type
 - Expansion of Existing Parks
- Park Development
 - Parks to Standard (PTS) Program
 - Metro Parks
 - Linear Park System Delineation and Development
 - Use of Vacant or Undeveloped Sites
- Recreational Facilities
 - Sports Fields
 - Recreation Centers
 - Swimming Pools
 - Golf and Tennis
- Park Maintenance Facilities
 - New Sites
 - Renovation and/or relocation of Existing Sites
- Parks Headquarters

The following table summarizes the needs assessment for Houston. Included is information establishing the basis for each need.

Needs Assessment Summary Table

Need	Location		Basis for Need
	By Type	By Sector	
Land Acquisition			
Acquire 79 new park sites	11 – pocket 46 – neighborhood 17 – community 3 – regional 2 - metro	16 – Central 8 – Southeast 15 – Southwest 16 – West 13 – Northwest 8 – Northeast 3 – Far Northeast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Park standards• Community demand expressed at meetings and in survey results• Joint venture opportunities with other agencies
Expand 20 existing parks	5 – neighborhood 9 – community 3 – regional 2 – linear 1 – metro	6 – Central 2 – Southeast 3 – Southwest 1 – West 2 – Northwest 5 – Northeast 1 – Far Northeast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve park access and visibility• Relieve overuse
Park Development/Redevelopment			
Rehabilitate and restore all existing parks (Parks to Standard Program – PTS)	All types of parks and all geographic sectors included. Phase I (completed) – 81 parks Phase II (underway) – 42 parks Phase III (future) – 150 parks		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Condition of existing parks• Popularity of PTS program• Community demand expressed at public meetings and in survey results
Improve metro parks	Hermann Park (further redevelopment) Herman Brown Park (further development) Keith Wiess (update master plan and implement) Memorial Park (complete new master plan and implement) Proposed northwest site (master planning) Proposed southwest site (master planning)		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing use levels• Protection of natural assets• Assist private sector initiatives• Imagine Houston report
Expand the linear park system	<u>Major Drainageways</u> Berry Creek Hunting Bayou * Brays Bayou* Keegans Bayou * Buffalo Bayou * Little White Oak Bayou Caney Creek San Jacinto River Clear Creek Sims Bayou * Greens Bayou * Spring Creek Halls Bayou * White Oak Bayou * Horsepen Bayou * <u>Rails to Trails</u> Harrisburg Trail Sunset Trail		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect and enhance Houston’s major natural areas• *Designated bikeway corridor per Comprehensive Bikeway Plan• Assist private sector initiatives• Utilize former railroad corridors
Improve and/or develop 12 vacant or undeveloped park sites	<u>By Type</u> 1 – pocket 4 – neighborhood 5 – community 2 – regional	<u>By Sector</u> 2 – Central 2 – Southeast 1 – Southwest 2 – West 2 – Northwest 3 – Northeast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing urbanized areas with inadequate parkland• Improve park access and visibility• Soccer field needs

Need	Location		Basis for Need
	By Type	By Sector	
Recreational Facilities			
Build more soccer fields at 28 existing and proposed parks	<u>No. of Sites</u>	<u>Sector</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Resolve conflicts with other sports● Relocate tournament fields out of neighborhood parks● Relieve overuse of existing fields● Meet park standards
	11	Central	
	2	Southeast	
	6	Southwest	
	2	West	
	4	Northwest	
	2	Northeast	
1	Far Northeast		
Construct 10 new recreation centers	<u>No. of Sites</u>	<u>Sector</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Provide facilities in communities and regions currently not served● Meet recreation facility standards
	1	Southeast	
	2	Southwest	
	3	West	
	2	Northwest	
	1	Northeast	
	1	Far Northeast	
Rehabilitate and/or replace existing swimming pools	City wide – all sectors		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Community demand expressed at meetings and in surveys● Houston’s climate
Construct an Olympic-quality natatorium	Central Sector		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● No such existing facility within City of Houston● Houston’s goal to host 2012 Olympics
Park Maintenance Facilities			
Acquire and construct 7 new facilities; close 5 existing sites	<u>No. of Sites</u>	<u>Sector</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Eliminate substandard facilities in poor locations● Reduce travel times by personnel● Provide adequate levels of maintenance at new parks and rehabilitated existing parks
	1	Central	
	1	Southeast	
	1	Southwest	
	1	West	
	1	Northwest	
	1	Northeast	
1	Far Northeast		
Parks Headquarters			
Construct a new Parks and Recreation Department headquarters facility	Central Sector		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Existing headquarters has outlived its useful life.

LAND ACQUISITION TARGET AREAS

Following are recommended land acquisitions by park type for each of the City's seven geographic sectors. The lists include new sites and expansion of existing sites. As shown in the table on the following page, a total of 79 new park sites are recommended along with expansion of 20 existing parks. Proposed parkland acquisitions are based on the Parks Standards and influenced by physical constraints such as major streets, railroads and drainageways, and by existing non-City facilities, namely private neighborhood parks. Pocket parks are proposed for areas inside Loop 610 that have higher population densities and minimal undeveloped land. Community parks are recommended for existing neighborhoods with private recreation facilities. Most of these neighborhoods are completely developed; consequently, there is no available land *within* the subdivision suitable for a neighborhood park. Other proposed, new community parks are mostly needed to provide land for additional soccer fields. These sites are individually identified on the sector maps.

The following information is provided for each listed land acquisition need:

- Vicinity (usually defined by location within the major thoroughfare system)
- Key map page
- Super neighborhood identification number
- Council district
- Undeveloped land availability- rated as good, fair, or poor
- Land development activity-rated as high, medium or low

Land availability has been evaluated by reviewing 1998 aerial photography. Land development activity has been evaluated through the following means:

- Building permit data reports prepared by the Planning and Development Department
- Comparison of recent and older aerial photography
- Subdivision platting activity

Comments are provided for many proposed sites to offer additional guidance, especially on expansion of existing parks. Community parks primarily intended for soccer use are also noted.

PROPOSED NEW OR EXPANDED PARK SITES								
Park	Sector							
Type	Central	SE	SW	West	NW	NE	Far NE	Total
Pocket	11							11
Neighborhood	3	7	8	11	8	7	2	46
Community	1	1	5	4	4	1	1	17
Regional	1		1	1				3
Metro			1		1			2
	16	8	15	16	13	8	3	79
Expansion of existing park	6	2	3	1	2	5	1	20

Land Acquisition

Acquiring parkland in a city as large and complex as Houston is a challenging task and one that imposes great burdens on the Parks and Recreation Department staff. Assistance can be expected from the City's Public Works Real Estate Division, but probably not to the extent necessary, especially in light of the parkland needs identified herein. Additional real estate guidance and knowledge is needed. An optimum solution would be the formation of a citizen's advisory group entitled the Park Acquisition Advisory Committee. The committee would be comprised of Houstonians with local expertise in all aspects of real estate. As a group they would offer guidance on land values, availability and suitability of needed park sites and overall development trends. As individuals, they would have contacts with landowners throughout the City, and could provide assistance in negotiating appropriate land purchase prices or possibly, even in seeking donations. Their expertise would be welcome both on new park site acquisitions as well as expansion of existing parks. Their efforts would supplement and be coordinated with those of City staff and the Parks Board.

In certain parts of the City, parkland acquisition is being addressed by City Council approved Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (T.I.R.Z.). Two examples are Midtown and Greenspoint. Both T.I.R.Z.'s include commitments to provide park sites, thus, relieving the Parks and Recreation Department of the responsibility in those select areas.

Potential parkland acquisitions are not limited solely to privately held properties. Public/semi-public agencies, including school districts, utility companies, Harris County, and even other City of Houston departments, hold vacant tracts or surplus lands, or need to acquire lands that could support joint recreational use. Several such sites are identified herein.

An excellent opportunity for joint use regards regional storm water detention sites needed for flood control purposes by the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD). This opportunity is further enhanced by the fact that most detention sites are located along bayous and streams designated as linear parks. (See Figure 6.11.) Detention basins can be constructed as either dry bottom or wet bottom, the latter having a permanent pool of water. To date, the County has built only dry bottom detention basins. Wet bottom detention

generally requires a greater area of land to provide the same acre-feet capacity. Additional excavation is also required to provide adequate pond depth and promote water quality. Either type can provide recreational use. With proper grading, sports fields can be incorporated into dry bottom sites and used except at a high flood stage. Detention basins transformed into ponds offer wonderful settings for passive recreational uses. Joint recreational use of regional stormwater detention sites should be pursued where the sites are highly visible and easily accessed. A perfect example is already underway – the Willow Waterhole park site in southwest Houston. This 250 acre project will have a dual role of providing much needed flood control in the Brays Bayou watershed and much needed passive, regional open space for Meyerland and surrounding neighborhoods. Originally proposed by local residents and civic organizations, the project has evolved into a unique partnership between the private sector, the City of Houston, Harris County, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Willow Waterhole Park clearly demonstrates how private citizens and multiple government entities can effectively and economically alleviate Houston's most pressing needs by working together in partnership.

Land Acquisition Target Areas - Central Sector

VICINITY	KEY MAP	SUPER NEIGH.	COUNCIL DISTRICT	LAND AVAILABILITY	LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
Pocket Parks						
N. Main/Airline N. Loop/Cavalcade	453	15	H	Poor	Medium	
Fulton/Irvington N. Loop/Cavalcade	453	51	H	Poor	Low	
West Loop/Railroad Westheimer/Richmond	491	23	G	Poor	Low	Built-out subdivision (Afton Oaks)
Shepherd/Dunlavy W. Gray/Westheimer	492	24	D	Poor	High	Utilize Metropolitan Service Center site
Shepherd/Montrose Westheimer/Richmond	492	24	D	Poor	High	Utilize former library site on Richmond and Mandell
Heights Blvd/Studewood 11 th Street/White Oak Dr.	493	15	H	Poor	Medium	
Montrose/Spur 527 Westheimer/Richmond	493	24	D	Poor	High	
Montrose/Bagby Gray/Westheimer	493	24	D	Poor	High	
Midtown (Multiple Sites)	493	62	I	Fair	High	T.I.R.Z. will be acquiring parkland per Council approved plan
HB&T Railroad/SP Railroad Navigation/Harrisburg	494	63	I	Poor	Low	Existing SPARKS
Harrisburg/ Sunset Trail/Brays Bayou	495	82	I	Fair	Low	Preferably locate on bayou
Neighborhood Parks						
Ella/T.C. Jester W. 11 th	452	14	A	Good	Low	Acquire all or part of wooded H.I.S.D. site
I-45/Lockwood Collingsworth/North Loop	454	52	B	Fair	Low	Existing SPARK
Cullen/MLK Blvd. Griggs/Yellowstone	534	68	D	Fair	Low	Existing SPARK
Community Parks						
West Loop/North Freeway North Loop/Katy Freeway	452 492	14/15	A/H	Fair	Medium	Intended for soccer fields
Regional Parks						
Buffalo Bayou	494	63	H	Medium	Low	Land acquisition adjacent to bayou via Buffalo Bayou Partnership

Existing Parks Under Consideration for Expansion						
Little Thicket Park (Neighborhood)	452	15	H	Good	Medium	Expand southward to front on T.C. Jester
Eastwood Park (Community)	494	63	I	Fair	Medium	Undersized, well-used park in highly populated area
Beech White Park (Community)	533	68	D	Poor	Low	1) Purchase and clear adjoining, objectionable uses 2) Extend Mainer St. to increase street frontage 3) Consider eastward expansion to railroad
Zollie Scales Park (Neighborhood)	533	68	D	Good	Low	Increase street frontage by expanding east to Tierwester and/or west to Peerless, and reclassify as community park; partly intended for soccer fields
Ingrando Park (Community)	535	70	I	Fair	Low	Densely populated area; additional parkland needed
Mason Park (Regional)	535	65	I	Good	Low	Acquire vacant tracts to east for mountain biking

Land Acquisition Target Areas - Southeast Sector

VICINITY	KEY MAP	SUPER NEIGH.	COUNCIL DISTRICT	LAND AVAILABILITY	LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
Neighborhood Parks						
Scott/Cullen Belfort/Reed	533	71	D	Fair	Low	Existing SPARK
Telephone/Broadway Belfort/Airport Blvd.	535	78	I	Poor	Low	Option: Provide SPARK at Lewis Elementary
Monroe/Edgebrook Airport Blvd./Alameda Genoa	575	78	E	Fair	Low	Easthaven Subdivision
Telephone/Monroe Alameda Genoa/Fuqua	575	78	E	Fair	High	Houston Skyscraper Shadows Subdivision
Edgebrook/Beamer Fuqua/South Belt	576	80	E	Good	Medium	Possible site identified
Scarsdale/F.M. 1959 Gulf Frwy/Old Galveston Rd.	577	80	E	Fair	Low	Sycamore Valley Subdivision; provide pocket park as alternative
Scarsdale/Dixie Farm Rd. Beamer/Gulf Frwy.	616	80	E	Good	Medium	Small, existing private recreation site
Community Parks						
Gulf Freeway/South Loop La Porte Freeway/City limit	535	75	I/E	Good	Low	Intended for soccer fields
Existing Parks Under Consideration for Expansion						
Scottcrest Park	573	71	D	Poor	Low	Increase frontage on Airport Blvd. and reclassify as community park; provide soccer fields
Wilson Memorial Park (Community)	576	79	E	Fair	Low	Increase access and visibility on S.H. 3 to serve residents east of highway

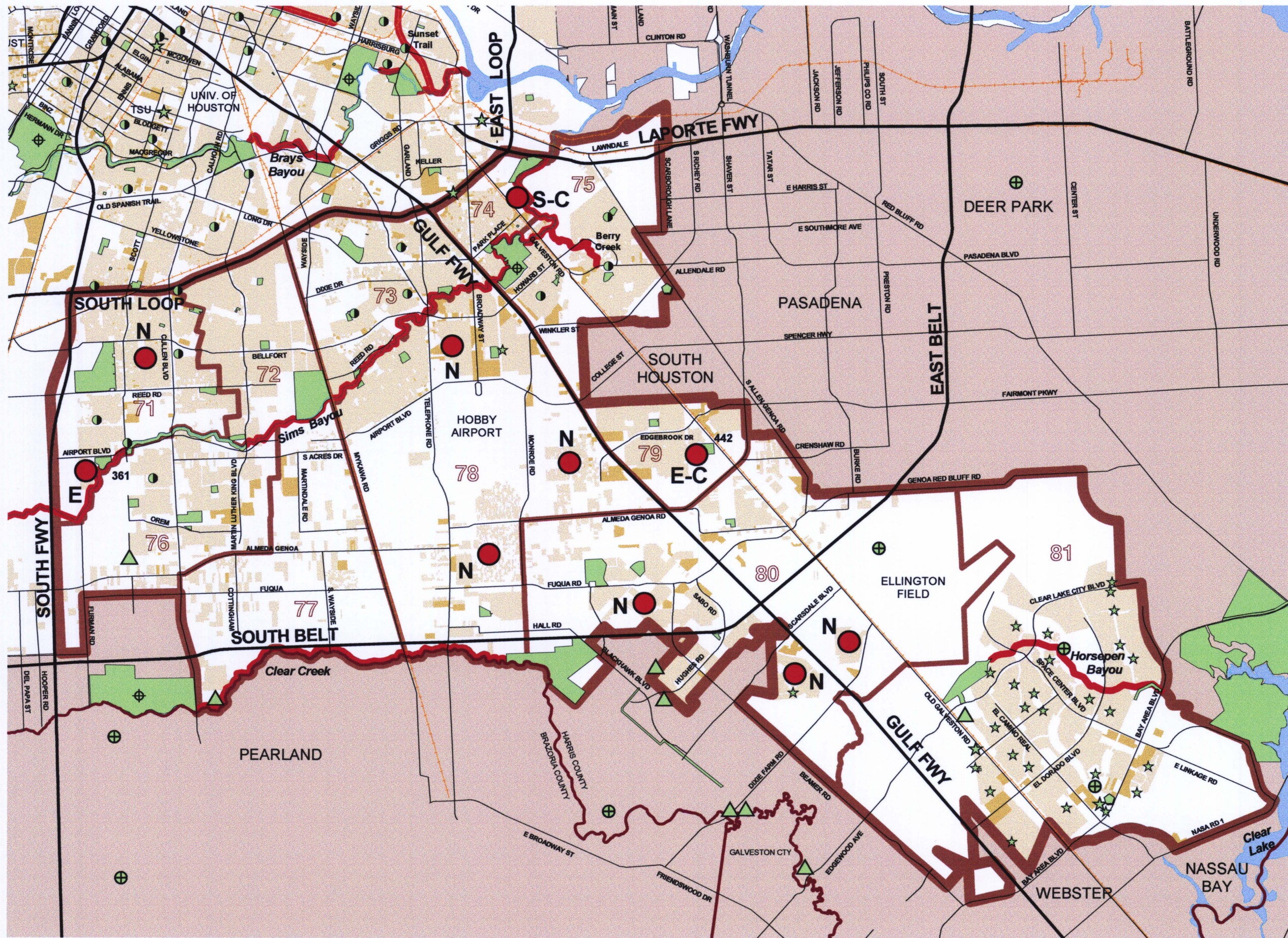


Figure 6.4
**PROPOSED
 NEW PARKS**
Southeast Sector